

BISHOP (L.F.)

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Simultaneous examina-
tion of symmetric
structures.



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**THE VALUE OF BIMANUAL SIMULTANEOUS
EXAMINATION OF SYMMETRIC
STRUCTURES.**

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THE perfect man should be ambidextrous. The left hand should be able to perform, and with nicety, every motion that the right can perform. In medical work there is a distinct advantage in being able to use both hands alike, and in having their sensibility and perception equally trained. This is not a difficult matter if the student recognizes its advantage early in his career and makes all his examinations first with one hand and then with the other. It very often happens that a good deal of danger from infection is avoided by being able to avoid in an examination the use of a finger that has been scratched or injured. To the ambidextrous man this comes to be done almost without thought.

Of course, there is no need of argument as to the value of bimanual examination in the usual sense—that is, with one hand upon one part of an organ and the other hand upon another part. There is another kind of bimanual examination that is of a good deal of value for quick and accurate diagnosis of surgical conditions. It depends upon the symmetry of the body and upon a co-ordination of



movements between the two hands of the examiner. How close this co-ordination is in performing symmetric movements is best illustrated by taking a piece of chalk in each hand and drawing a symmetric figure, the right hand drawing the left half of the figure, and the left hand the right half. A good system of examination of surgical conditions is as follows: Place the patient in a perfectly symmetric position, so that one-half of the body is as nearly as possible in the same relative position as the other half. Standing directly behind or in front of the patient, place one hand upon the part to be examined, and the other hand upon the corresponding healthy structure and palpate corresponding portions with each hand. For instance, in a case of suspected injury of the shoulder one stands directly behind the patient, and, starting with acromion processes, with the right hand upon the right shoulder and the left hand upon the left shoulder, each part of the healthy shoulder is palpated and compared with the corresponding part of the injured shoulder. By this means the sound part of the body is used as an anatomic model to refresh and furnish anatomic information at the instant when required; and the information so acquired has this advantage, that it is accurate for the patient in hand, and this cannot be true of any general description. It goes without saying that we must be on our guard not to be misled by the slight differences that exist between the right and left sides of all people, but in general the right and left sides of the same individual are more nearly alike than the right sides of two separate individuals.

Manual skill in examinations of all kinds is worthy the immense amount of labor and patience

that is necessary for its attainment. One should examine healthy structures every day and whenever the opportunity offers. For not only is attention required to attain skill in physical examination, but labor is necessary to maintain it when acquired.

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